

**A note on *Lamellaria mauritiana*
(Gastropoda Prosobranchia) in South Africa**
(Notes on South African Marine Mollusca 7)¹⁾

by

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The species of the mainly tropical prosobranch genus *Lamellaria* Montagu, 1815, are characterized by fragile internal shells. They are known to feed on ascidians and usually are camouflaged to resemble their prey and kindred backgrounds. Along the southern and eastern coasts of Africa about half a dozen species of *Lamellaria* occur from the intertidal zone to as deep as 1780 fathoms.

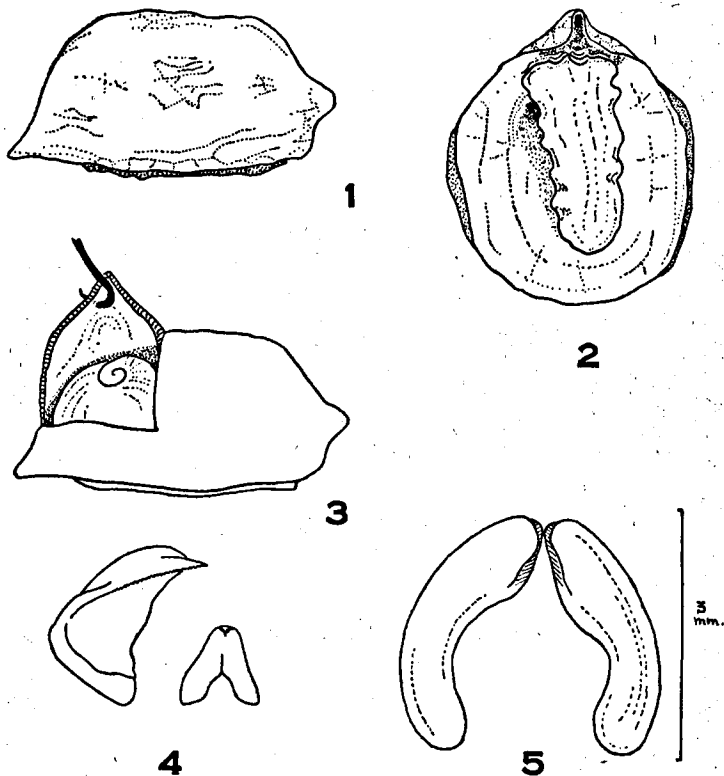
In 1901 E. A. SMITH (1901, p. 108, repeated 1903, p. 384) introduced *Lamellaria mauritiana* (Bergh, 1853) to the South African fauna basing his record on a large shell from Port Elizabeth. BARNARD (1963, p. 58) rejected its inclusion in the list, writing that it "is most unlikely that an example—shell without animal—of this Mauritian species came to Port Elizabeth except by human agency". Unfortunately he overlooked the apparent existence of a large species on the subtropical shores of Natal, occurring as far south as East London and possibly occasionally even Port Elizabeth.

In the Natal Museum there are shells from Durban, Umkomaas, Scottburgh (also *ex pisce* from off Scottburgh), Isezela and Port Shepstone in the H. C. BURNUP and W. FALCON collections. Recently the East London Museum submitted for identification a female specimen of a large species of *Lamellaria* from the intertidal zone of Bonza Bay, north of East London; it was collected in October 1964 by Mrs. M. A. RIX. It appears that this specimen represents the species from the Natal coast hitherto known from shells only.

The animal (Figs. 1-2) is 60 mm long, 45 mm wide and 29 mm high; the foot measures 37 × 18 mm. The colour is a pale yellowish brown with an irregular reticulate pattern of dark brown; the foot-sole is dark blackish brown with paler margin and central patch. The shell, shown in position in Fig. 3, has a maximum diameter of

¹⁾ No. 6, see Ann. Natal Mus., vol. 15, pp. 267-272, 1962.

41 mm. The radula measures 49×2 mm and consists of 92 transverse rows of teeth of which 19 are exposed and 73 covered by the sheath; of these about 10 rows are still unchitinised. The radula teeth (Fig. 4) are of the usual type, the median plates being bifid. The jaws (Fig. 5) have a span of approximately 3 mm.



Figs. 1-5. *Lamellaria mauritiana* (Bergh), Bonza Bay near East London; 1, preserved animal from the right (actual length 60 mm); 2, do., from underside; 3, do., from the right, shell shown in position; 4, lateral and median plates of the radula, highly enlarged; 5, jaws.

The shell of the above specimen matches those identified as *L. mauritiana* in the Natal Museum perfectly. For specific identification

in this genus the value of the shell is probably at best doubtful. Size, colour pattern, radula and jaws exclude the three South African species as described by BERGH (1907) and BARNARD (*loc. cit.*): *L. perspicua* (L.), *L. capensis* (Bergh) and *L. lepticoncha* (Bergh).

Thanks to the assistance of my colleague Dr. R. TUCKER ABBOTT of the Academy of Natural Sciences (Philadelphia, U.S.A.), I was able to examine alcohol specimens, which supposedly represent *L. mauritiana*. These were collected in November, 1960, by R. OSTHEIMER and VIRGINIA ORR near Cap Malheureux on N. Mauritius (Station M204). Colour pattern, shell, radula and jaws of the biggest specimen (total length about 50 mm) generally agree well with those of the Bonza Bay specimen; slight differences may be of an individual or probably subspecific nature. Pending further research one has to consider the South African species conspecific with the one known from Mauritius. If only the latter occurs on the island, then it undoubtedly represents BERGH's *L. mauritiana*; it is quite possible that other species occur as well, which will make it more difficult to decide which of those is *L. mauritiana*. The main difficulty is that BERGH did not dissect the animal, thus basing the name on a shell only. No description of the anatomy of *L. mauritiana* is available to the present author. Recently JOYCE ALLAN (ALLAN, 1958) has even refrained from naming Australian species of *Lamellaria*. However, eventually it will become necessary to attach BERGH's name to a Mauritian species. Although BERGH's original shell, if still in existence, is undoubtedly the type of *L. mauritiana*, it may even become necessary to designate a dissected "metatype" for the species (cf. MUNRO, 1957, pp. 15-16). For the time being the shells of the Mauritian and South African specimens under discussion agree well enough with BERGH's original description and figures (BERGH, 1853, pl. 5 fig. 2) to be named provisionally *L. mauritiana*.

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¹⁾ Photostat copies of description and figure of *Chelyonotus mauritianus* kindly supplied by Dr. Lemche of the Copenhagen Museum.